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ABSTRACT

A study examined the course structure and educational practices used by National Home Study Council (NHSC) member institutions. To gather data for the study, researchers mailed questionnaires to 60 members of the NHSC. Based on data from the 51 usable responses, the researchers determined that the average age of students enrolled in programs offered by the institutions is 28. The schools offer an average of 16 courses each. The individual courses, which have an average of 58 assignments or submissions, take students 18 months to complete and have a 50-percent lesson completion rate. The majority (75 percent) of examination questions are objective in style, and most exams are graded by hand by "qualified instructors." Approximately 45 percent of the schools use toll-free telephone lines for educational purposes, 82 percent use preprinted (stock) motivation letters, 49 percent own their own computers, and 65 percent publish a newsletter for students. The overwhelming majority (94 percent) of the schools are optimistic about their future over the next 18 months and are planning to offer new courses shortly. (MN)

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1983 HOME STUDY SURVEY

A Report on Current Course Structure and Educational Practices in NHSC Member Institutions

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FOREWORD

In October 1982 the National Home Study Council surveyed its accredited member institutions to determine current aspects of home study educational practice.

In all, 60 NHSC institutions were surveyed and there were 51 usable responses, for a response rate of 85%. Virtually all of the larger institutions (active enrollments over 5,000) responded, making for a reasonably broad picture of current practice.

In continuing its long tradition of conducting practical research and performing its role as a clearinghouse of information, the Council hopes to provide home study educators with a succinct, accurate picture of the state-of-the-art of home study courses and practices in the home study field.

What emerges from this survey is an up to date profile of home study courses and services. We hope that home study educators everywhere will find the survey results useful for internal comparison and planning purposes.

Further information about this survey and the data in this report -- or about the home study field -- may be obtained by contacting the National Home Study Council, 1601 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, 202-234-5100.

William A. Fowler
Executive Director
March 1983

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SURVEY METHOD

In October 1982 the 60 members of the National Home Study Council were sent a mail survey form (enclosed). The institutions responded by December 1, 1982.

At the time the data was compiled, 51 usable responses had been received for an 85% response rate.

Because of the mass of data involved, most of the data are displayed in tables. Selected data are recorded using "weighted averages" within specific school categories, each category being weighted on the basis of the number of the school's active students. Military school data were not considered in the weighting process because their enormously large enrollments would skew any "averages."

The column headed "Number of Institutions Responding" indicates the number of those institutions which actually responded to the specific question addressed by the title of the particular Table.

The data are displayed in school size categories for comparative analysis by schools.

1983 Home Study Survey

Executive Summary

According to the survey results (see accompanying tables), here is a profile of the educational practices of the "typical" NHSC member institution:

-- The average age of students is 28

-- The average number of courses offered is 16

-- Courses have an average 58 assignment/submissions, take students 18 months to complete, and have a 50% lesson completion rate

-- Schools grade and return lessons in three days

-- The majority (75%) of examination questions are objective in style

-- Only 18% of the courses use kits; only 12% use tools

-- 41% of the courses are 8½ x 11 inch loose leaf bound; only 10% of the courses are hard bound published texts

-- The majority (51%) of schools grade exams by hand using "qualified instructors"

-- Over 84% of schools have instructors who write comments on submissions; 76% of school instructors write personal letter to students

-- 45% of the schools use WATS/toll free telephone lines for educational purposes

-- 82% of the schools use pre-printed (stock) motivation letters

-- Nearly half (49%) of the schools own their own computer

-- 65% of schools publish a newsletter for students

-- 94% of schools are optimistic about their school's future over the coming 18 months

-- More than half (60%) of the schools are planning to offer new courses over the next 18 months.

The accompanying 14 tables of data provide an in depth look at current educational practices in NHSC member schools.

Table 1. Average Number of Home Study Students (Active and New Enrollments)

Enrollment Size	Number of Institutions	Average No. of Active Students[1]	Average New Enrollments During Year[1]
Total Active Students			
Less than 200	7	71	122
201 to 500	6	322	679
501 to 1,000	6	710	781
1,001 to 2,500	7	1,724	3,275
2,501 to 5,000	11	3,390	2,732
5,001 to 25,000	6	15,298	9,766
25,001 and Greater	4	37,165	26,390
Military Schools	4	168,490	201,700
Totals	51		

[1]The arithmetic average within this grouping

Tabe 2. Age and Sex of Students

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Percent (Avg.)[1] Male	Female	Average Age[1]
Less than 200	7	52%	48%	29
201 to 500	6	65%	35%	26
501 to 1,000	6	67%	33%	30
1,001 to 2,500	7	55%	45%	34
2,501 to 5,000	11	60%	40%	28
5,001 to 25,000	6	65%	35%	31
25,001 and Greater	4	78%	22%	28
Military Schools	4	I.D.[2]	I.D.[2]	23
Totals	51			28 years = weighted average[3]

[1]Arithmetic Average Within Group Size
[2]Insufficient Data
[3]Weighted Average (by school enrollment size) for Entire Column (excludes military data).

Table 3. Instructional Staff Status

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Percent of Instructors who are -- Full Time	Part Time	Percent of Instructors -- Working on Premises	Working off Premises
Less than 200	7	42%	58%	90%	10%
201 to 500	6	82	18	95	5
501 to 1,000	6	82	18	88	12
1,001 to 2,500	7	30	70	62	38
2,501 to 5,000	11	68	32	78	22
5,001 to 25,000	6	63	37	59	41
25,001 and Greater	4	68	32	73	27
Military Schools	4	100	0	100	0

Table 4. Course Data: Lessons, Months to Complete, Completion Rate, Turnaround Time[1]

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Average No. of Courses	Average No. of Submitted Assignments In Each Course	Average Months to Complete	Average Lesson Completion Rate	Average Days to Grade and Return Lessons
Less than 200	7	3	50	9	65	3
201 to 500	6	4	29	9	76	3
501 to 1,000	6	2	14	6	71	3
1,001 to 2,500	7	17	29	9	52	3
2,501 to 5,000	11	3	19	9	57	4
5,001 to 25,000	6	8	40	13	56	3
25,001 and Greater	4	25	83	25	44	3
Military Schools	4	307	I.D.	12	66	9
Totals	51	16 courses[2]	58 assignments[2]	18 months[2]	50%[2]	3 days[2]

[1]Based on data from the respondent's three most popular courses

[2]Weighted average (excludes military)

Table 5. Course Development Procedure

Courses are typically developed with . . . (number of school respondents)

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Entirely in House Staff	Entirely Outside Authors	Both in House and Outside	Already Published Texts	Other
Less than 200	7	5	0	1	1	0
201 to 500	6	1	0	5	0	0
501 to 1,000	6	4	0	2	0	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	1	0	4	2	0
2,501 to 5,000	11'	4	0	6	1	0
5,001 to 25,000	6	4	0	2	0	0
25,001 and Greater	4	0	0	3	1	0
Military Schools	4	3	0	1	0	0
Totals	51	22(43%)	0	24(47%)	5(10%)	0

Table 6. Course Examination Items

Courses typically make use of examination items which are . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Objective	Subjective	Projects/Artwork	Other
Less than 200	7	5	1	0	1
201 to 500	6	5	0	1	0
501 to 1,000	6	4	2	0	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	5	2	0	0
2,501 to 5,000	11	8	2	0	1
5,001 to 25,000	6	3	1	2	0
25,001 and Greater	4	4	0	0	0
Military Schools	4	4	0	0	0
Totals	51	38(75%)	8(16%)	3	2

Table 7. Course Tuition, Kits, Tools and Resident Components

Number of institutions with courses that typically include . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	In this Sub-Group Tuition Range Is . . .	Kits	Tools	Mandatory Resident Training
Less than 200	7	$25. - $2595.	1	1	3
201 to 500	6	45. - 2795.	1	1	2
501 to 1,000	6	75. - 664.	0	1	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	29. - 2495.	2	0	1
2,501 to 5,000	11	Free - 2895.	1	1	2
5,001 to 25,000	6	40. - 2790.	1	0	1
25,001 and Greater	4	339. - 3250.	2	2	0
Military Schools	4	No tuition	0	0	0
Totals	51		8(16%)	6(12%)	9(18%)

Table 8. Course Text Binding Method

In binding course texts, the predominant method used is . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	8½ x 11 in. Loose Leaf	Off Size Loose Leaf	Perfect Bound Soft Cover	Side or Saddled Stitched Soft Cover	Hard Bound "Published"	Other
Less than 200	7	4	1	0	1	0	1
201 to 500	6	3	0	2	1	0	0
501 to 1,000	6	4	0	1	0	1	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	0	2	2	0	3	0
2,501 to 5,000	11	7	0	2	2	0	0
5,001 to 25,000	6	3	0	1	2	0	0
25,001 and Greater	4	0	0	0	3	1	0
Military Schools	4	0	0	1	3	0	0
Totals	51	21(41%)	3(6%)	9(18%)	12(24%)	5(10%)	1(1%)

Table 9. Method Used to Evaluate Submitted Assignments

The predominant method for grading assignments is . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Hand Grading by Clerical Help -- Instructor "Available"	Hand Grading -- Qualified Instructor	Computer Scored -- Personal Comment	Computer Scored -- Computer Letter
Less than 200	7	1	5	0	1
201 to 500	6	2	4	0	0
501 to 1,000	6	3	2	1	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	2	4	0	1
2,501 to 5,000	11	4	7	0	0
5,001 to 25,000	6	4	2	0	0
25,001 and Greater	4	2	1	0	1
Military Schools	4	2	1	0	1
Totals	51	20(39%)	26(51%)	1	4

Table 10. Types of Educational Services/Media Available

The number of Institutions within each sub-group have available these media/services . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	WATS Line Telephone	Instructor Comments On Lessons	Instructor Cassette Tape Comments	Instructor Personal Letters	Proctored Exams	Model Solutions
Less than 200	7	2	7	1	7	1	1
201 to 500	6	4	5	2	4	1	0
501 to 1,000	6	1	6	0	5	1	2
1,001 to 2,500	7	3	6	1	5	2	2
2,501 to 5,000	11	5	10	1	10	3	2
5,001 to 25,000	6	3	6	1	4	1	3
25,001 and Greater	4	2	3	0	4	1	2
Military Schools	4	3	0	0	1	4	2
Totals	51	23(45%)	43(84%)	6(11%)	39(76%)	14(27%)	14(27%)

Table 11. School Communication Methods and Media

In communicating to students, the number of Institutions within each sub-group use these methods . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Pre-Printed Motivation Letters	Personally Typed Letters	Mailgrams & Electronic Mail	School - Initiated Phone Calls	Incentive Awards
Less than 200	7	5	6	0	6	3
201 to 500	6	4	5	0	3	0
501 to 1,000	6	5	3	0	0	1
1,001 to 2,500	7	6	5	1	1	1
2,501 to 5,000	11	9	9	3	4	3
5,001 to 25,000	6	5	3	1	2	1
25,001 and Greater	4	4	3	3	3	3
Military Schools	4	4	0	0	0	2
Totals	51	42(82%)	34(66%)	8(16%)	19(37%)	14(27%)

Table 12. Computer Ownership

The number of Institutions within each subgroup which use/own computers for educational purposes is . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Own A Computer	Lease Computer/or Computer Time	Neither own Nor Lease
Less than 200	7	0	1	6
201 to 500	6	3	0	3
501 to 1,000	6	1	1	4
1,001 to 2,500	7	2	1	4
2,501 to 5,000	11	7	0	4
5,001 to 25,000	6	5	0	1
25,001 and Greater	4	4	0	0
Military Schools	4	3	1	0
Totals	51	25(49%)	4(8%)	22(43%)

Table 13. Student Services and Activities

The number of Institutions within each subgroup which offers the following services to students is . . .

Total Active Students	Number of Institutions	Student Newsletter	Job Placement Assistance	Alumni Association	Honor Society	Other
Less than 200	7	4	4	1	1	0
201 to 500	6	5	5	0	0	0
501 to 1,000	6	2	2	0	1	0
1,001 to 2,500	7	4	1	1	0	2
2,501 to 5,000	11	7	4	0	0	0
5,001 to 25,000	6	5	3	2	0	2
25,001 and Greater	4	3	0	2	2	2
Military Schools	4	3	N.A.	2	2	2
Totals	51	33(65%)	19(37%)	8(16%)	6(12%)	8(16%)

Table 14. Survey Respondent's Plans and Feelings About Future

(Note: Category of 25 - 50% Increase was inadvertently omitted from the choices available to respondents)

	More than 100% Increase	Increase of 50 - 100%	Increase of 1 - 24%	No Increase	Enrollment Decline
I. For new enrollments in the next 18 months, which do you predict for your school? (N = 51)	4(8%)	5(10%)	34(66%)	8(16%)	0

II. Do you plan to offer a new course in the next 18 months? (N = 51)	Yes - 31 (60%)	No 20(40%)

	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Neither
III. For the coming 18 months, are you optimistic or pessimistic over your school's prospects? (N = 51)	48(94%)	1(2%)	2(4%)